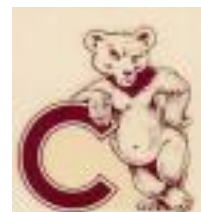




CCWW Sports Report No. 516
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by
Rich Coyle '68



HAPPY NEW YEAR.

I promised an early January report so here it is. Four of Cornell's "big five" winter sports teams—all except women's hockey—were in action over the holidays and here's how they did.

Men's Hockey played just one game and last Saturday got a home victory over Canisius, which was ranked No. 20 at the time. The final score was 6-2. Cornell was led offensively by **Kyle Betts '21**, who had a hat trick, and **Trevor Yates '18**, whose two goals brought his team-leading total to ten for the season. I've written before about the scoring depth of this year's Big Red team. Case in point: the six Red goals came from two different lines, neither of which included Cornell's top two scorers over the past two years, **Mitch Vanderlaan '19** and **Anthony Angello '19**. Betts' three goals were all assisted by linemates **Alex Rauter '18** and **Jeff Malott '20**. In addition to his two goals, Yates picked up an assist on a goal by linemate **Morgan Barron '21**. **Hayden Stewart '18**, getting his second straight start, stopped 24 of 26 Canisius shots on goal to earn the win.

With an 11-2 record, Cornell has the best winning percentage in the country. This week the Red moved up a spot, to fourth, in the USA Today poll, while staying at No. 5 in the USCHO poll. And the Red are fourth in in the Pairwise rankings. This weekend, the Big Red return to ECAC play, hosting Princeton and Quinnipiac. The Tigers are coming off back-to-back overtime ties with St. Cloud State, the nation's No. 1 team, and they are likely to give Cornell a battle. Q-Pac is always tough, although the Bobcats are having an off season and have won just two of their last eight games. Both games will be streamed on the ILN starting at 4:00 p.m. PST.

Right after exams, **Wrestling** had a dual meet in Buffalo and cruised to a 31-6 victory. The meet was held on the stage of UB's Center for the Arts, and was billed as "Mayhem on the Mainstage." The mayhem was mostly inflicted by the Big Red, which won eight of ten matches, losing only at 125 and heavyweight. Star freshman **Yianni Diakomihalis '21** won by a fall at 141 as did **Jon Jay Chavez '19** at 165, while **Max Dean '21** won a decisive major decision at 184.

Perhaps to make up for having to go to Buffalo, the team got a holiday trip to Florida. The event was called the "South Beach Wrestling Experience" although it was held in Deerfield Beach, a much less toney area 35 miles north of the actual South Beach. The Big Red, which came into the event ranked No. 11 by InterMat, split four dual meets over two days against pretty good competition. The Red's first meet was against an unranked (but pretty good) North Dakota State team, and it came down to the final, heavyweight match. The Bison won that match by a point and won the meet, 20-16. Cornell had trouble at the low weights, as the Bison won five of the first six matches and took a 17-6 lead. Wins by **Brandon Womack '19** at 174, Dean at 184, and **Ben Darmstadt '21** at 197 brought the Red within a single point and it looked like the comeback would be complete when **Ben Honis '19**, an NCAA qualifier last year at 197 who seems to have lost *that* slot to the freshman Darmstadt, and was wrestling up at heavyweight, had a 7-6 lead before giving up a last-second two-point takedown to give the match and the meet to NDSU.

Cornell immediately had another dual the same day, this one against eighth-ranked Minnesota, and, whaddayaknow, the Big Red got the upset win. The Red again fell way behind, losing five of the first seven bouts to trail by a score of 19-8. But a tech fall by Dean and a pin by Darmstadt gave Cornell 11 points and tied the score with just the heavyweight match left. This time Honis came through, taking a 4-3 decision to give the Big Red a 22-19 victory.

The next day brought another split for the Red. Cornell started with a dominant win over an unranked Kent State team. With no one to wrestle at 125, the Big Red had to forfeit and started off in a 6-0 hole. A loss at 133 made it 9-0 but that was it for the Golden Flashes. The Red won the last eight matches and Kent State lost two team points—I think it was for whining—making the final score 27-7.

Cornell's final dual, against fourth-ranked Missouri, did not go nearly as well. The Tigers won the first seven matches to take a 27-0 lead. Even Diakomihalis, who had been ranked No. 1 and had scored bonus points in each of his first three matches, lost—to the No. 5 wrestler from Mizzou. The Big Red did take the final three bouts. Dean and Darmstadt each won for the fourth time in the event, with Darmstadt winning by a major decision over the Mizzou wrestler, who was ranked second in the country. Ben was unranked but he's lost just once this season (to a ranked wrestler from Penn is his first tournament) and last weekend's performance should move him well up into the rankings.

The Big Red are off for a few weeks before a big showdown with EIWA rival Lehigh on January 19.

Men's Basketball lost three of five games and their record now stands at 5-7 with one game—against Central Pennsylvania College, a non-NCAA, non-NAIA team (I didn't think there was such a thing)—left before Ivy League play begins. I have watched most of the games and, while I would love to have seen more wins, I can say that this Big Red team is far better than any team in the Bill Courtney era, and much more pleasurable to watch. Two of the Red's seven losses, including its most recent, were to teams in the top-25 in national RPI. As I write this, Cornell itself has an RPI of 188—basically in the middle of the 351-team D-I pack—and that RPI is the third best in the Ivy League, behind only Princeton and Penn.

This stretch of five games started with two cupcakes, Lafayette and Longwood, holders of two of the nine worst RPI's in the country, and Cornell dispatched both. The Big Red then lost by three to Niagara in a game in which the Red was down by 15 points in the second half, pulled to within two, again fell behind by double digits before finally losing when a trey at the buzzer bounced off the rim. Cornell then lost to Delaware, after leading by 11 with seven minutes to go. The Blue Hens tied the game with 16 seconds left and won in overtime. Finally, the Big Red went down to Alabama to play a very good Auburn team (No. 14 in the latest RPI rankings) and stayed with the Tigers for a half before getting blown away.

Cornell has two very good offensive players, **Matt Morgan '19** and **Stone Gettings '19**. Morgan is now the second-leading scorer in the country and is riding an eleven-game streak of scoring 20 or more points, a Cornell record. Matt had 33 points against Niagara and 34 against Delaware. Gettings had 30 points against Niagara and then followed that up with 39 against Delaware. But coach **Brian Earl** is still looking for the other pieces and what the Big Red really need is some defensive size.

Women's Basketball is improving but this is an inexperienced team that is likely to finish near the bottom of the Ivy League. Since the end of first-semester exams, Cornell has played six games, could have won four or five, but actually won only two. The Red lost back-to-back overtime home games to Oakland and Binghamton. The Oakland loss came despite (a) a career-high 25 points from **Sam Widmann '20**; and (b) having a five-point lead with less than two minutes to go in regulation. Against Bingo, the Big Red led by three with 20 seconds left but fouled a shooter on a three-point attempt and the Bearcat sank all three free throws to tie the game. After that, Bingo scored all of the points in OT and won by eight.

Cornell then went on the road for four games, starting at Drexel, a better team than the Red. Cornell hung with the Dragons gamely for much of the game, trailing by just six points after three quarters, but Drexel dominated the final period, led by as many as 25 and won by 22. The Big Red then lost another tight game, this one at New Hampshire. The game was tied with less than a minute to go but after a basket by UNH, a Cornell turnover, a UNH free-throw and a missed trey by the Red that would have tied the game the home team escaped with a 48-45 victory.

The Big Red did eventually get back on the winning track, with easy wins at UMass-Lowell and NJIT, two of the three worst teams in D-I women's basketball, based on RPI. Cornell defeated UML by 18 points, taking the lead for good less than four minutes into the game. NJIT gave the Red more of a battle, leading for much of the first half before Cornell took over in the third quarter, got the lead up to 20 points with three

minutes remaining and won by 15. Widmann had the Big Red's first double-double of the season with 23 points and a career-high 14 rebounds. The Red are now off until next weekend when they start Ivy play at Penn and Princeton. They will have their work cut out for them. With an RPI of 300, the Big Red are, I'm sorry to say, far and away the worst team in the Ivy League so far this season.

Women's Hockey has not played since December 2. This long break has been in the schedule for many years, I suspect so that Cornell would not have to play games with top players out competing for the Canadian or USA women's national teams in traditional holiday tournaments. Unfortunately for Cornell, the principle did not really hold this year. Because this is an Olympic year, the Canadian national team was put together last summer and has been training and playing together all fall. The only Cornell undergraduate attempting to make the team, **Micah Zandee-Hart**, is taking the school year off. Furthermore, Canada will be sending its Development (U-22) team, which includes three current Cornell players, to the Nations Cup in Germany but that tournament is going on this week in Füssen, Germany. So three top players, forward **Kristin O'Neill '20**, defender **Jaime Bourbonnais '20**, and goalie **Marlène Boissonnault '19** will all miss this weekend's games at Princeton and Quinnipiac. And yet another Cornell player, defender **Willow Slobodzian '21**, will miss the next two weekends while she plays with the Canada U-18 team at the IIHF U-18 championships in Russia.

As for the Olympics, I'm sorry to report that a few weeks ago, Zandee-Hart was the last player cut from the Canadian Olympic team. I assume that rather than returning to school right away and using up a year of eligibility on a partial season, Micah will defer her return until next fall and come back with two more full seasons of hockey for Cornell. Meanwhile, five Cornell alums did make the final Canadian Olympic team roster. **Rebecca Johnston '12** will be going to Korea looking for her third Olympic Gold Medal, while **Lauriane Rougeau '13**, **Laura Fortino '13** and **Brianne Jenner '15** will be gunning for their second, and **Jill Saulnier '15** will also be there—as the first woman from Nova Scotia to make the Canadian Olympic hockey team.

Well, that's my first report of the New Year.

GO BIG RED!